



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

## Aquatic Species Conservation and Management



### Research Ready to Continue at the Lake Sturgeon Spawning Reef on the Detroit River

Following a year of delays, post construction evaluation is set to commence on the Detroit River at the site of an artificial lake sturgeon spawning reef. Researchers from Alpena FRO and USGS Great Lakes Science Center initiated pre-construction assessment at the proposed site in the spring of 2003. The goal at that time was to document fish use of the site to evaluate efficacy of placement of artificial substrate in this system. Construction of the reef was delayed first by funding and contracting issues in the fall of 2003 and then by weather conditions in the spring of 2004. By July of 2004 construction of the reef was

completed but unfortunately was completed too late to assess lake sturgeon spawning in 2004.

The reef is located at the northeast end of Belle Isle and is actually a series of three reefs close to one another. Each reef is composed of different substrate materials, one being crushed limestone, another made of field stone, and a third of coal cinders. All three materials have been successfully used as lake sturgeon spawning habitat at other locations around the Great Lakes.

Assessment methods used in 2003 included large mesh gillnets and baited setlines for lake sturgeon, egg mats for the collection of fish eggs, and experimental gillnets and baited minnow traps for other fish species. Results revealed that the area was not being used by lake sturgeon and only a few potential egg predators (crayfish, madtoms, rockbass, and round goby) were captured at the site. Eggs that were captured on the egg mats were taken back to the USGS lab in Ann Arbor which when reared to fry size revealed that they were walleye. Although researchers had suspected that walleye were using the Detroit River for spawning it, was not documented until that time.

The same assessment methods used in 2003 were again employed in 2005, with the primary objective of documenting fish use, more specifically lake sturgeon use of the spawning reef. During the first two weeks of sampling spawning ready male and female walleye were captured in gillnets and presumably walleye eggs were collected from the egg mats. As water temperatures increase over the next few weeks we expect to begin capturing spawning ready lake sturgeon at or near the reefs. If sexually mature lake sturgeon are captured we will be implanting the fish with ultrasonic transmitters and then follow them over the next three years. Information gained from this work will provide insight about the origin of the lake sturgeon using the newly constructed reefs and the home range of those individual fish.

Resources from both the Service and the USGS were pooled to efficiently monitor this site. Major contributors for this project include; Michigan Sea Grant, EPA, US Army Corps of Engineers, Great Lakes Fishery Trust, Michigan DNR, City of Detroit, and Detroit Edison. If successful this project will not only be the first artificial spawning reef constructed in the Great Lakes specifically for lake sturgeon, but will also serve as a demonstration of a partnership effort working for the common good of a listed species.

This effort provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental agencies to achieve common Great Lakes management objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the “Partnerships and Accountability”, “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”, and “Leadership in Science and Technology” focus areas of the Fisheries Program’s Vision for the Future.

*James Boase*

## Leadership in Science and Technology



### Lake Whitefish Ageing Workshop

On March 10 and 11, Fishery Biologists Scott Koproski and Adam Kowalski traveled to an ageing workshop in Port Huron, MI to present techniques used by the Alpena FRO to age lake whitefish. The workshop was attended by all agencies involved with the Lake Huron Lake Whitefish Distribution Study funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Restoration Act. The study involves tagging and tracking between 1,500-3,000 lake whitefish annually for 3 years at 8 spawning locations

within Lake Huron to determine stock boundaries.

The purpose of the workshop was to develop uniform techniques for ageing scales, otoliths, and fin rays collected from lake whitefish for this project. Each of the six contributing agencies (USFWS, MDNR, CORA, OMNR, Chippewas of Nawash, Bruce Power) sent representatives to this workshop and presented the techniques they use to analyze lake whitefish structures. Biologist Kowalski presented techniques he uses to age lake whitefish scales, and Biologist Koproski presented techniques he uses to age lake whitefish otoliths and fin rays. Each agency shared slightly different preparation techniques for a particular structure, and there was lots of discussion regarding the interpretation of the edge of a structure as an annulus. Agers also discussed techniques to identify the first annulus within a structure. The group plans to have a future workshop to develop standards for ageing Lake Huron lake whitefish. We plan to produce an ageing guide for Lake Huron lake whitefish which will identify the best techniques for structure preparation and interpretation to ensure that agencies assign lake whitefish ages consistently.

This workshop will facilitate consistent ageing among partner agencies involved in the Lake Huron Lake Whitefish Distribution Study. This workshop is an example of the Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fishery Vision Priorities: "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", "Cooperation with Native Americans", and "Leadership in Science and Technology".

*Scott Koproski*

## Partnerships and Accountability



### Alpena FRO Travels to DC to Celebrate Habitat

During the week of March 7-11 Project Leader McClain traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in a Scaling Up Fisheries event "Celebrating Habitat". In addition to ceremonies involving Regional and Washington Office personnel and friends of the Service, Fisheries personnel scheduled a number of meetings with members of Congress and/or staff to provide updates on Service activities in support of the nation's aquatic resources.

In preparation for the week McClain had contacted and scheduled meetings with the offices of Congressman Bart Stupak (M1), Congressman Peter Hoekstra (M2),

Congresswoman Candice Miller (M10), and Congressman John Dingell (M15) from Michigan and Senator George Voinovich from Ohio. Michigan project leaders collaborated on the scheduling and participation in meetings for most congressional delegations from the state to share the workload. This approach worked very well and some productive meetings resulted.

McClain followed up the meetings with an email "thank-you" to the congressional staffers for which he had scheduled meetings and reiterated invitations for members of Congress and their Washington office staffers to view on-the-water activities of station staff when they are in the districts.

Outreach events provide an opportunity for the Service to highlight its efforts to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Although relationships have been established with district staff of Michigan's congressional representatives, this event provided Alpena FRO staff an opportunity to establish relationships with the Washington offices as well. This activity is supportive of the Fisheries Vision for the Future priority of "Partnerships and Accountability".

*Jerry McClain*

### Invaders of the Great Lakes Seminar Hosted by MSU

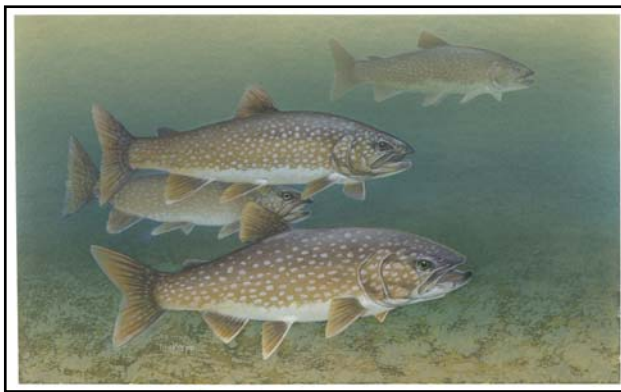
Alpena FRO Biologist Anjanette Bowen attended the "Invaders of the Great Lakes: Options for Prevention and Management" seminar held at Michigan State University's Kellogg Center Auditorium in East Lansing, Michigan on March 8. The seminar was a program of the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Week at Michigan State University (MSU) and was sponsored by MSU, Michigan Sea Grant, Michigan DEQ, North American Lake Management

Society, and the USGS. A variety of university and resource agency speakers provided information on the current state of invasive species within the Great Lakes and technology that is being developed that may provide control. Other Service representatives that attended the event included Bob Kavetsky and Burr Fisher of the East Lansing Field Office.

The seminar served as a means of communication among researchers working with invasive species and provided useful information consistent with the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability" components of the Fisheries Vision for the Future.

*Anjanette Bowen*

## Cooperation with Native Americans



### **Service Biologist Co-Chairs Modeling Subcommittee Meeting for 1836 Treaty Waters**

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO along with Shawn Sitar of Michigan DNR co-chaired the March 15-17 meeting of the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC). The primary focus of this meeting was to generate preliminary 2005 harvest limits for lake trout

in 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan, although other technical matters were discussed. As stipulated in the 2000 Consent Decree, preliminary lake trout harvest numbers must be calculated by the MSC, reviewed by the TFC, and presented to the parties to the decree by March 31 each year. The 2000 Consent Decree is a 20 year fishery allocation agreement for 1836 Treaty waters signed by the State of Michigan, United States, Bay Mills Indian Community, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. The MSC will complete final lake trout harvest numbers and present them to the parties by April 30th as stipulated in the Decree.

Biologist Woldt and Ji He of the Michigan DNR presented an update of the status of northern Lake Huron (MH-1 and MH-2) lake trout stock assessment models, model diagnostic output, and preliminary 2005 lake trout harvest limits. 2005 Lake Huron preliminary lake trout harvest limits increased slightly from 2004 levels due to continued lower than target total mortality rates and increases in stock biomass due to decreasing mortality. In 2005, the Lake Huron models were updated to include time varying weight at age and time varying maturity at age to capture recent shifts in weight at age and maturity at age in Lake Huron lake trout populations. These preliminary limits were presented to the TFC for review on April 6.

In addition to performing model analyses, biologist Woldt helped run the MSC meeting ensuring all agenda items were discussed and kept meeting minutes. A preliminary draft of the March 15-17 MSC meeting minutes was emailed to MSC members for review.



Harvest limits produced at this meeting, when reviewed by the parties and finalized, will become binding 2005 lake trout harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters. These harvest limits will allow lake trout fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the lake trout stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while meeting the needs of tribal communities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Cooperation with Native Americans" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

*Aaron Woldt*

## Public Use



### **Lake Sturgeon the Topic of Presentation to the Association of Lifelong Learners**

Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski was invited to speak at Alpena Community College (ACC) on March 24, 2005. Kowalski gave a 1 ½ hour long PowerPoint presentation about lake sturgeon to a group of community members called the Association of Life Long Learners. Kowalski's presentation highlighted the history of lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes, general biological characteristics of lake sturgeon, habitat and spawning requirements, past and current harvest of lake sturgeon, current research projects, and future research needs.

The Life Long Learners are a group of adult and senior community members that solicit educational presentations of all types to promote learning in the later years of life. This was a great opportunity for the Alpena FRO to talk with a group of community members regarding projects that the USFWS does in the local community.

This presentation is consistent with the Service's goal of implementing outreach activities to educate the public regarding Service activities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Public Use" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

*Adam Kowalski*

## Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management



### **Thunder Bay Project Implementation Working Committee Meeting**

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt participated in a Working Committee meeting for the Thunder Bay Power Company Thunder Bay River Project Implementation. The Working Committee was created to assist Thunder Bay Power (TBP) in meeting the requirements of its Federal Energy Regulatory

Commission (FERC) license. Biologist Woldt is the Service representative on the Working Committee.

The primary focus of the March 17, 2005 meeting was the pending sale of the Thunder Bay River Projects to North American Hydro, although other matters were discussed. Scott Klabunde and Bill Pickerel from North American Hydro joined the meeting via conference call to answer questions regarding status of the sale and property transfer, FERC license transfer, and future plans for working with the Committee. The sale is expected to be finalized by the end of April. Mr. Klabunde said that North American Hydro will provide a chairman for the Working Committee and is committed to continuing the multi-agency and multi-user group structure of the Working Committee.

The meeting was attended by member representatives from Michigan DNR, TBP, and the Service. In addition representatives from the Michigan Hydropower Relicensing Coalition, Hubbard Lake Sportsmen and Improvement Association, Montmorency Conservation District, Thunder Bay Audubon Society, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, and landowner Jack Matthias also participated.

Service involvement in the TBP Working Committee provides opportunities to minimize or mitigate the impacts of habitat alteration on fish and other aquatic species caused by hydropower facilities in the Thunder Bay River system. This outcome is consistent with the “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management” priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

*Aaron Woldt*



### **Lake Huron Basin Team Collaborates with the Fish Passage Program**

On March 16, Biologist Wells attended the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Lake Huron Basin Team meeting in Roscommon Michigan. Biologist Wells provided a brief overview of the Fish Passage Program to the team and led discussion on development of a process for including the Basin Team in the field ranking of fish passage projects before submission to the Regional Office. After discussion, it was concluded that the Basin Team will identify specific projects or project types that are a priority for the MDNR. In August Wells will attend the Lake Huron Basin Team meeting to formally review new MDNR projects and projects previously submitted directly to the Alpena FRO and rank them together for September addition to the FONS database. This will occur annually with the station Fish Passage Coordinator as a Lake Huron Basin Team agenda item every August.

This is an example of collaboration between federal and state government agencies. Collaboration on aquatic habitat restoration efforts will enhance fish passage within the Lake Huron Watershed. This project addresses the Service’s Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management” and “Partnerships and Accountability”.

*Susan Wells*



## Partners Program Completing Permitting for 2005 Field Season

Alpena FRO Partners for Fish and Wildlife (Partners) Coordinator, Heather Enterline worked throughout the month of March to complete and submit permits to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, to the State Historic Preservation Office, and Intra-Service Section 7

Biological Evaluation Forms (when needed) to the East Lansing Field Office in preparation for the 2005 field season. National Environmental Policy Act Compliance checklists were completed as well as the Hazardous Substance Examination Checklist. All paperwork must be completed and approved before bids can be taken or any projects initiated. Completing the paperwork during the winter months enables us to focus on field activities during the field season. Some initial site inspections were completed, but the ground was frozen and there was two feet of snow cover, so we were unable to survey. Completion of aquatic habitat restoration projects contribute toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" component of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

*Heather Enterline*